

The Benefits of Solitude

Some people fill up their schedule because they thrive on being busy. Others have no choice because of the demands of their everyday lives. Making time for yourself can:

- Improve your physical and mental health by reducing stress and tension.
- Enhance your creativity and problem-solving abilities.
- Benefit your personal relationships.

To get the most out of solitude:

1. Make solitude a regular part of your day and your week by scheduling short periods of time for yourself.
2. Don't allow other people to make requests that interfere with your solitude time.
3. Use times in the day when you are already alone to relax, such as taking a shower, walking the dog, etc.
4. Use your lunch time for solitude. Eat alone, go for a walk, use the time to think.
5. Cut back on household chores to free up time. Decide which chores aren't really necessary, and delegate tasks to others.

Your Personal Time-Alone Needs

Do you ever feel you can't stand to be in the presence of another human being for one more minute? Experts say that everyone needs a little isolation time and that some people crave more of it than others.

The need for alone time and the need to be with others are both essential. Alone time is required for the unconscious to process and unravel problems, and it can re-energize you and boost your creativity.

How much time alone is enough? Some people have more built-in-solitude needs than others, but external factors, like a particularly harried week at work, can make even the most social butterfly long for a cocoon.

Solitude is getting harder to come by today. The communications crush of cell phones, pagers, and e-mail makes it increasingly difficult to escape from other people. Some people feel that taking time for themselves is self-indulgent.

Ask yourself these questions to determine how much alone time you need:

1. Am I more irritable than usual?
2. Do I feel put-upon and annoyed when friends and family call?
3. Do I feel fatigued?
4. Am I finding it increasingly difficult to think important things through?
5. Has my creativity taken a plunge?

If you answered yes to at least three of these questions, you may need to spend more time alone.

Solitude can be simple. Sometimes we can be refreshed by taking a nap or a walk around the block.

Other times we need something more dramatic: to get away from it all by ourselves.